

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 09773 021720Z

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6900

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 9773

FOLLOWING TEL CALCUTTA 1568 DTD 01 JUL 76 RCVD NEW DELHI
BEING REPEATED TO YOU. QUOTE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CALCUTTA 1568

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: VISIT TO WEST BENGAL DISTRICTS BY CONGEN FSL

1. WE ARE POUCHING TO EMBASSY POL SUMMARY REPORT BY CONGEN
POLITICAL FSL BACHOO ROY ON TOUR HE MADE OF FOUR RURAL
DISTRICTS IN WEST BENGAL, MALDA IN THE NORTHERN PART OF
THE STATE, AND PURULIA, BIRBHUM AND BANKURA IN THE SOUTH
FROM JUNE 18 THROUGH 23. MEMCONS WILL BE SENT ALONG SUB-
SEQUENTLY. FOLLOWING ARE MAIN POINTS THAT EMERGED FROM THE
TRIP.

2. THE YOUTH CONGRESS APPARATUS IN ALL THE DISTRICTS VISITED
HAS BEEN REORGANIZED, WITH OFFICIALS OF L.K. BOSE'S NLCC
NOW IN POSITIONS OF TOP LEADERSHIP. HOWEVER, THIS OFFICIAL
YC STRUCTURE HAS RELATIVELY LITTLE FOLLOWING AND ITS LEADERS
"ARE MOVING AROUND WITH A LOT OF TREPIDATION." YOUTH CONGRESS
RANK AND FILE IS STILL FOR THE MOST PART LOYAL TO ITS OUSTED
LEADER P.R. DAS MUNSHI AND TO SUBRATA MUKERJEE. THE DAS
MUNSHI-MUKERJEE FACTION IS ACTIVE AND HOLDS MEETINGS AND
RALLIES, WHEREAS THE OFFICIAL YC APPARATUS SEEMS LARGELY
INACTIVE.

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PAGE 02 NEW DE 09773 021720Z

3. THE SCHISM WITHIN THE YC ASIDE, THE EMERGENCY HAS INCREASED THE POLITICAL PATRONAGE POWER OF CONGRESS OFFICIALS; CONGRESS OFFICES ARE BUZZING WITH ACTIVITY AND FILLED WITH JOB SEEKERS AND SUPPLICANTS OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER. ROY REPORTS THAT CONGRESS OFFICIALS AT DISTRICT LEVEL ARE MAINLY BHADRALOKS (MIDDLE CLASS) WHO ENTERED THE PARTY RANKS FROM 1967 TO 72 AND WHO USE THE POWER THEY HAVE NOT GAINED IN THE PARTY TO BOLSTER THEIR OWN SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITIONS AND KEEP LANDLESS PEASANTRY DOWN. ROY FOUND THAT IN SOME DISTRICTS CONGRESS OFFICIALS ARE RESISTING IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAND REFORM PROGRAM; IN BIRBHUM DISTRICT, FOR EXAMPLE, LAND OWNERS HAD EVICTED SHARECROPPERS AFTER LATTER HAD REGISTERED WITH THE GOVERNMENT FOR OWNERSHIP RIGHTS. IN CERTAIN AREAS CONGRESS LANDOWNERS HAVE ALSO ORGANIZED THEMSELVES TO RESIST IMPLEMENTATION OF MINIMUM WAGE FOR AGRICULTURAL DAY LABORERS.

4. ROY REPORTS THAT LAND DISTRIBUTION IS MAKING SOME HEADWAY BUT PROGRESS IS SLOW. CONGRESS OFFICIALS ADMITTED THAT ONLY ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF LANDLESS LABOR HAD GOTTEN FARM LAND AND ONLY ABOUT TWENTY-FIVE TO THIRTY PERCENT HAD GOTTEN HOMESITES; BUT ABOUT HALF OF THE LAND DISTRIBUTED HAS GONE TO SCHEDULED CASTES AND TRIBES. EVEN THEN, MANY OF THE RECIPIENTS FIND THE LAND ALLOTTED TO THEM OF LITTLE USE BECAUSE IT IS BARREN AND ARID OR FAR REMOVED FROM THEIR CURRENT HABITAT.

5. MAIN CONCLUSION ROY REACHES IS THAT MOST OF WHAT IS BEING DONE TO IMPLEMENT THE TWENTY POINT PROGRAM IN THE DISTRICTS IS BEING DONE BY THE BUREAUCRACY. THE CPI IS CARRYING OUT SOME ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THE 20 POINT PROGRAM, BUT CPI IS WEAK IN MOST DISTRICTS AND IT LIKE CONGRESS HAS MIDDLE CLASS ELEMENTS WHO RESIST RATHER THAN SUPPORT CHANGE. PICTURE THAT EMERGES IS ONE OF A SLOW-MOVING, UNDERSTAFFED (IN THE DISTRICTS) BUREAUCRACY WHICH IS GRADUALLY--UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE TOP--CARRYING OUT REFORMS AND A CONGRESS PARTY APPARATUS (AGAIN, IN THE DISTRICTS) WHICH WHILE MOUTHING PROGRESSIVE SLOGANS IS IN FACT DOING ITS BEST TO FRUSTRATE REFORMS. THIS IS NO DOUBT TOO SIMPLISTIC TO FIT ALL SITUATIONS BUT ROY BELIEVES IT ACCURATE AS AN OVERALL GENERALIZATION.

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 09773 021720Z

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